CONTENT IDEAS

The First-Ever Research on Marketing Content Ideation

kapost ®

INDEX

SURVEY AUDIENCE

Methodology

Kapost surveyed B2B marketers in February and March of 2015 in order to understand how marketers come up with ideas for content, how many ideas it takes to achieve marketing goals, and the processes B2B marketers are (or are not) using to siphon ideas into creative pipelines.

{377} Respondents

JOB LEVEL

Manager - 42.7%
Specialist/ Coordinator -14.2%
C-level - 1.5%
VP - 9.8%
Director - 31.8%

COMPANY TYPE

B2C - 3.6%

B2B **76.5%** **19.9%** BOTH

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

of Employees
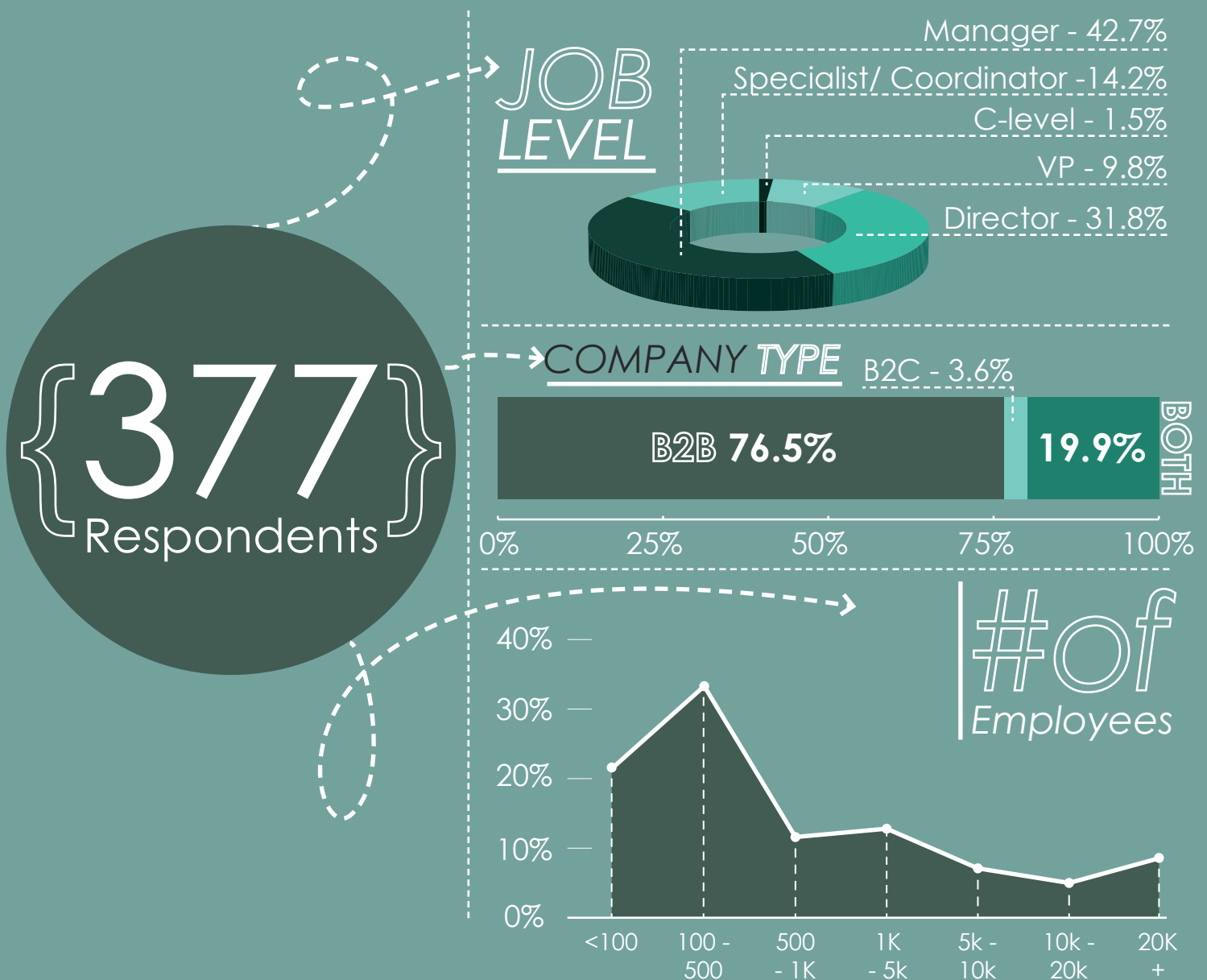
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

<100 | 100 - 500 | 500 - 1K | 1K - 5k | 5k - 10k | 10k - 20k | 20K +

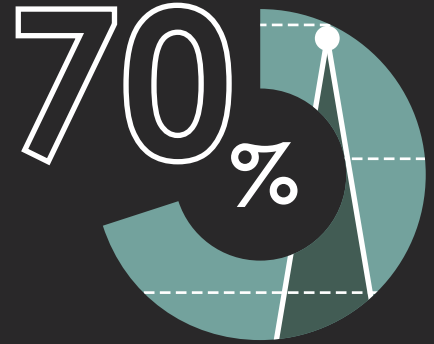**Content Ideas**: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

Top 10 Findings:
The Quick and Dirty Stats

39% of marketers say coming up with ideas is "DIFFICULT" or "somewhat difficult"

?

Almost **70%** of marketers want to be able to "crowdsource" ideas more easily from internal workers

1 in 2 marketers don't have enough ideas to fuel their content operations

Marketers estimate **NEEDING 67 IDEAS PER** quarter **TO BE** successful
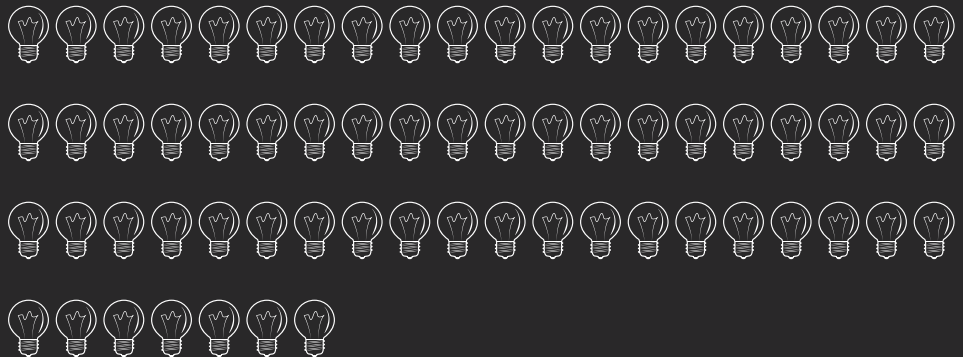
2/3 OF MARKETERS DON'T have a good process for gathering IDEAS INTERNALLY

99% SAY of marketers a constant, steady stream of ideas is crucial to effective content marketing
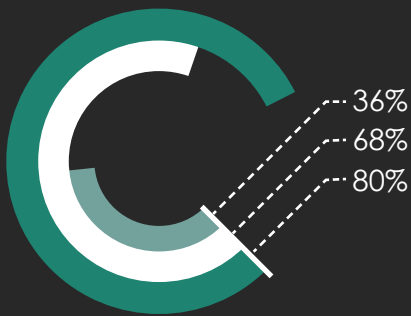
Company Size vs. Time to Turnaround a Single Blog Post

# of Employees

- 1-5k
- 5-10k
- 10-20k
- 20k+

(x-axis: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7)

# of Hours to Complete a Blog Post
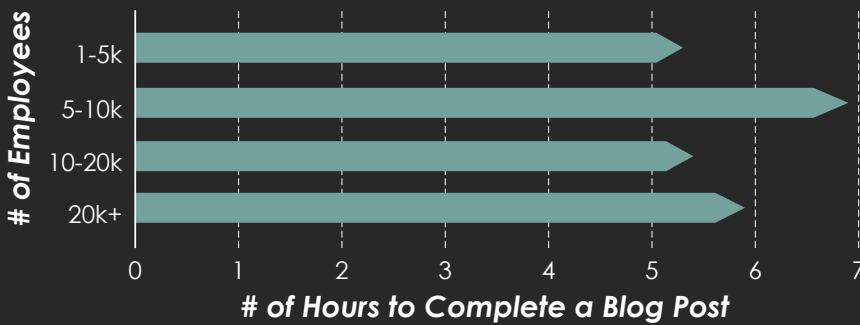
Marketers
—*on average*—
need **one** new idea per working day to ***fuel*** their **marketing efforts.**

THAT'S **251** **IDEAS** per year.

80% of C-level staff think they have enough ideas to fuel marketing efforts, but those in the weeds know better. Only **36%** of managers report having a good process for gathering ideas, and **68%** of managers say they're seeking ways to ***"crowdsource ideas"*** from internal resources.

- 36%
- 68%
- 80%

Respondents cited

- **Lack of a coordinated approach** as one of the main factors jeopardizing ideas coming into the creative pipeline.

- **Lack of strategy** ("haven't looked at our assets and approach as strategically as we should be.")

- **Not enough human resources** ("Lack of personnel to help manage a content strategy and calendar across all channels.")

2/3 SAY **CONTENT IS FUEL** ACROSS *ALL CHANNELS*

Percentage of Marketers who say this channel "relies on Content" to be successful

(x-axis: 0 20 40 60 80 100)

Marketing Channel

- Social Media
- Digital Marketing
- Demand Gen
- Marketing Communications
- Event Marketing
- PR
- Sales Enablement
- Product Marketing
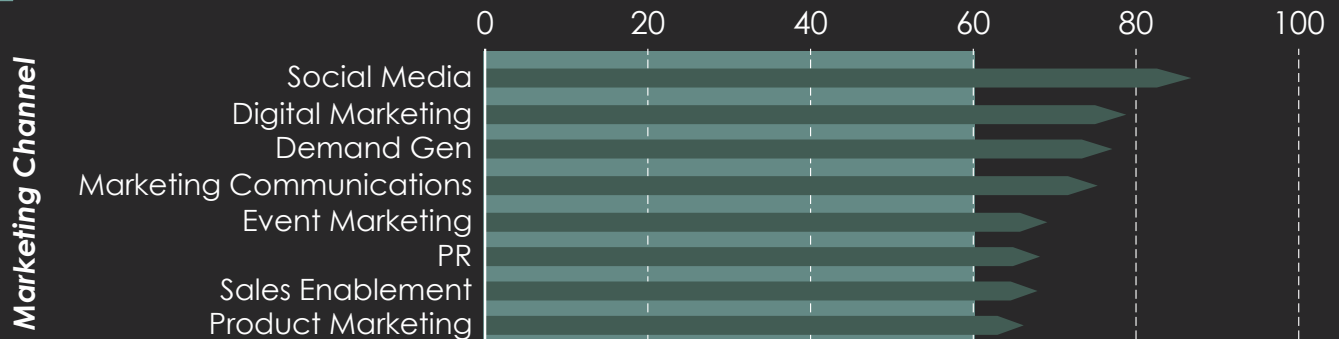
Key Findings & Analysis

Marketers require a steady stream of ideas. Why? Because ideas are the genesis of great content, and content is, in turn, the genesis of great marketing. But there is a severe distinction between knowing—in an idyllic sense—that ideas are important, and generating enough of them. 99% of marketers say they need a consistent pipeline of fresh ideas for content production, but **only half (51%) report having enough ideas to be successful.**

What's The Problem?

1. Execs Don't Understand the Extent of the Idea Demand

Marketers responsible for the execution of marketing content notice an insufficient "idea pipeline" more than higher-ups.

80% of marketing execs report that (1) their department has enough ideas to be successful, and (2) their marketing teams have a good process for ideation. This compares to only 52% of marketing managers who feel they have enough ideas and 36% of marketing managers who say they have a good process for idea generation.

This disparity illustrates the taxing demand of original content creation on content producers, which may not be fully understood by executives. This may be, in part, why marketers continually point to a lack of sufficient staff and/or resources as a challenge. The sheer volume of output is not fully understood by executive teams, and therefore approved budgets often fall short of providing for marketing needs.
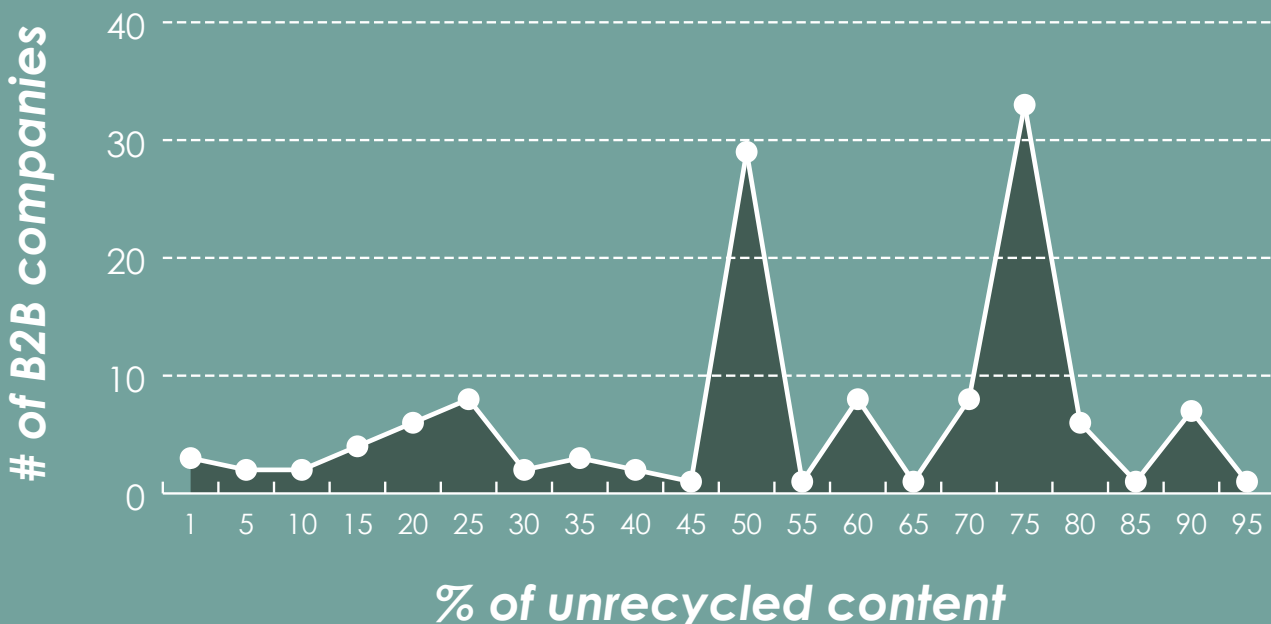
2. *No Good Way to "Crowdsource" Ideas Internally*

These days, crowdsourcing is used for myriad purposes: seed funding through KickStarter, user-generated content to spur marketing campaigns, and even academic research. But why go to such extremes when crowdsourcing can occur within your company's four walls?

Crowdsourcing marketing ideas is the concept of tapping internal experts or staff for content ideas. Despite the extensive number of internal resources most companies have, only 1 in 3 marketers say they do a good job at using internal resources to come up with new blog topics, marketing concepts, or articles. Meanwhile, 2 in 3 marketers report wanting a better process for crowdsourcing ideas.

3. *Good Ideas Get Used Once, Then Discarded*

On average (mode), 75% of ideas are turned into a content asset, published once, and never reused or repurposed again. This means that 3 in 4 content deliverables are "ad hoc" creations used for a singular purpose and then discarded. With that kind of content waste, it's no wonder marketers feel pressure to create a new idea every work day to fuel their efforts.*

# of B2B companies (y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40)

% of unrecycled content (x-axis: 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95)

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

4. Not Enough Strategy, Planning, or Long-Term Vision

With an unending demand for original content, most marketers point to a lack of strategy, coordination, and human resources as the primary reasons their ideation pipeline is thin.

Here's how respondents replied to the question, "why does your company struggle with content repurposing?"

"Lack of a coordinated approach"

"Moving too fast."

"We haven't looked at our assets and approach as strategically as we should be."

"Lack of visibility of all the content available."

"Missing system, processes and kind of 'content tagging' within a digital asset management system."

"No one takes the time to be strategic—it's more of a tactical 'let's get it published' approach."

"Content creation is not centralized although it is moving in that direction."

"It's not something we've ever really done. It's always 'we wrote one white paper! Now on to the next!'"

"Once we finish the content we move on to the next piece and we don't really strategize on all the ways to use that content at the time of or before it's completion."

"Lack of time and resources."

"Lack of personnel to help manage a content strategy and calendar across all channels."

"We don't know how to."

"No strategy or vision—always working to produce new content."

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

5. Executives Don't Invest Enough Budget into Marketing Infrastructure

Despite the fact that execs are more "bought in" or "sold" on the concept of content marketing than ever before, insufficient budget allocation toward infrastructure still plagues marketers.

To be successful in utilizing the heap of ideas necessary to fuel marketing efforts, marketers need a scalable process to support their goals. Things like:

- **Crowdsourcing ideas**

- **Tapping internal resources for new ideas or execution on those ideas**

- **Approval processes from cross-departmental areas**

- **The lack of structure and scalable infrastructure introduces pitfalls in the path to success**
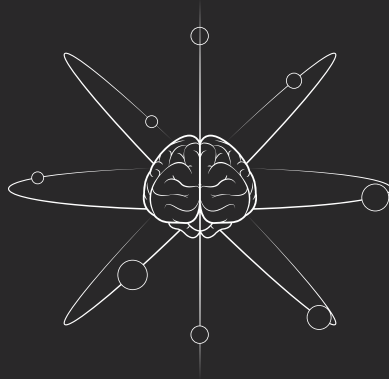
"The demand for original content never wanes, but we creative brains sometimes feel squeezed like a Scotch-Bright sponge: wrung out."

-Jean Spencer
Content Marketing Manager
Kapost

Complete Findings & Data:

I find coming up with ideas for content marketing is:

• **39% of marketers say coming up with ideas for content is "somewhat difficult" or "difficult," compared to 61% who say it's "easy" or "somewhat easy."**

SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT 36.73%

DIFFICULT 2.14%

EASY 13.94%

SOMEWHAT EASY 47.18%
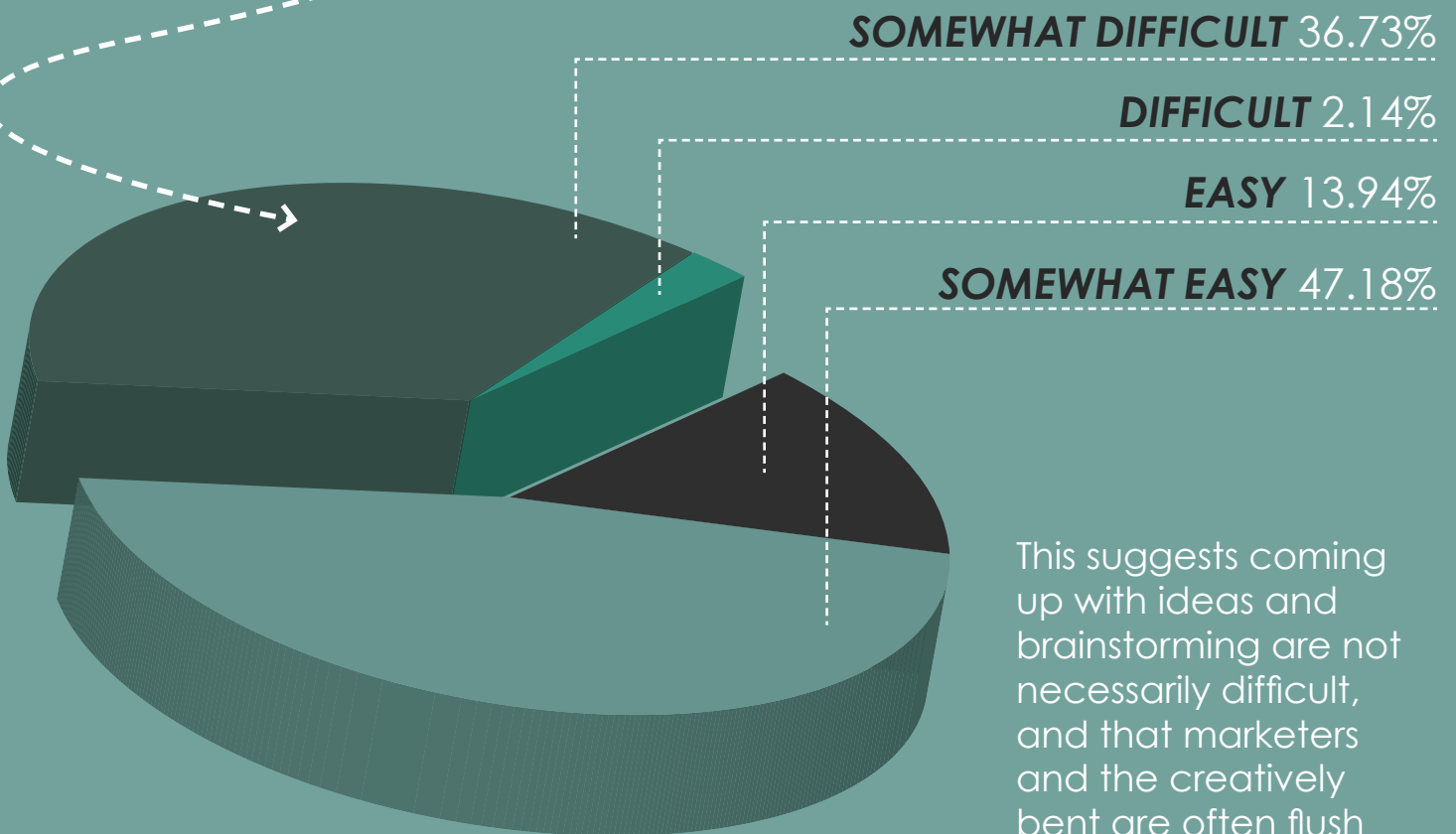
This suggests coming up with ideas and brainstorming are not necessarily difficult, and that marketers and the creatively bent are often flush with new ideas.

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

My company has a cross-departmental process for idea generation:

YES	NO

0   50   100
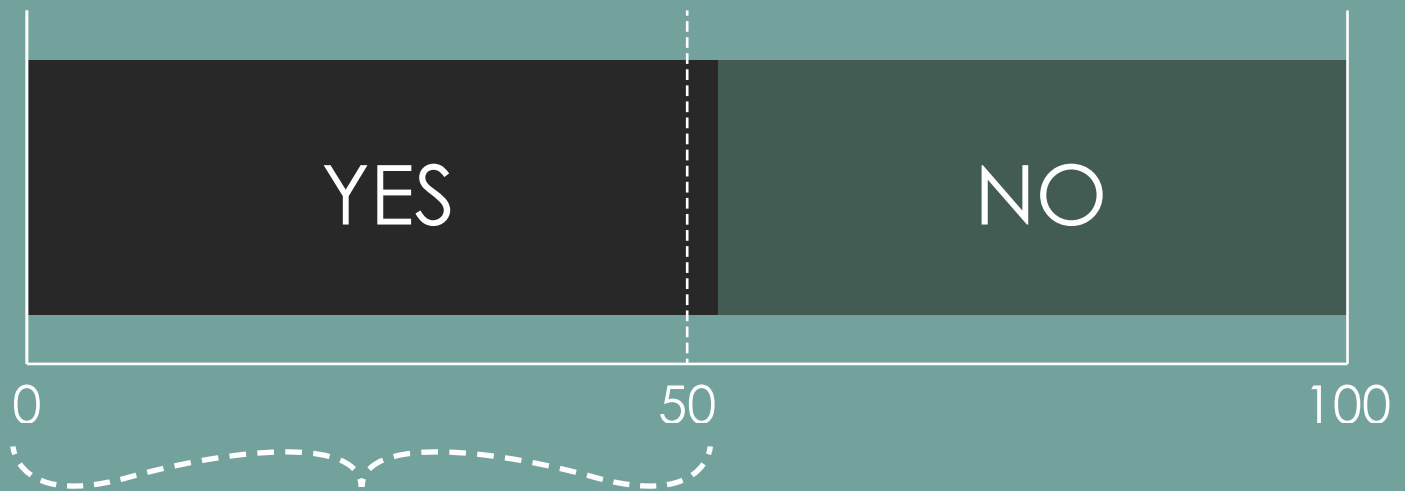
- *More than half of marketers report using a cross-departmental process for idea generation (52%).*

Cross-departmental strategies for ideation mean that marketers connect with other areas of the business—like product, sales, engineering—to discover new ideas, perspectives, or contexts for marketing content.
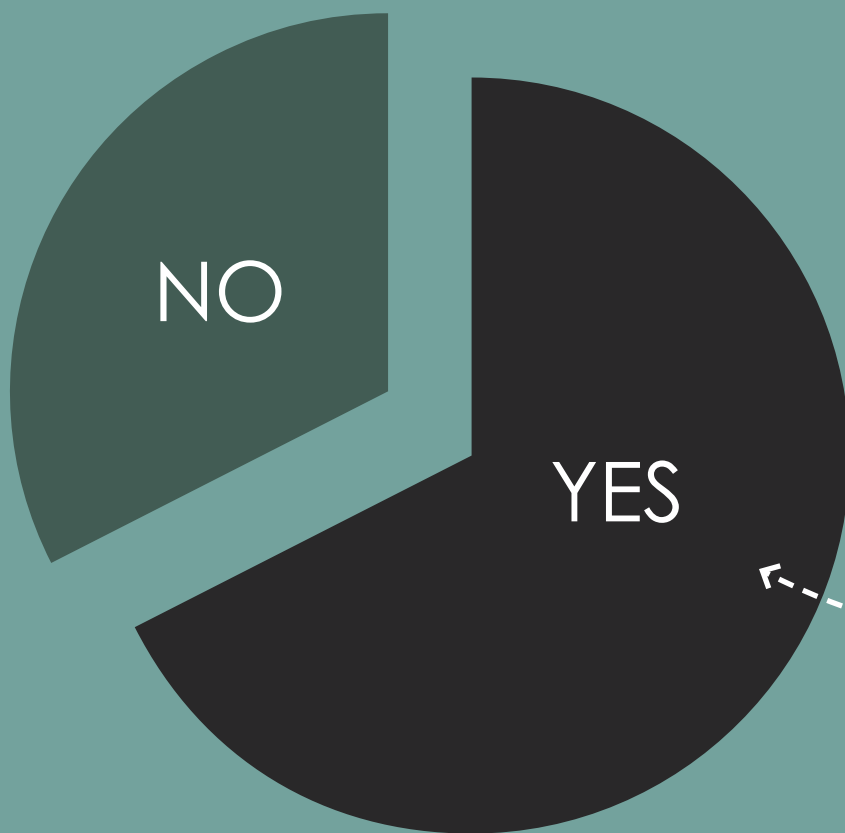
I want to be able to "crowdsource" ideas more easily from internal departments within my organization:

NO

YES

• *Roughly 2 in 3 marketers want a better way to crowdsource ideas from internal departments.*

While coming up with ideas is considered "somewhat easy" or "easy" for most marketers, the creative well can still dry up from time to time. Marketers desire stronger processes for leveraging internal resources for marketing content development, and 68% find value in the ability to crowdsource that process.

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

Do you feel like you have enough ideas for content marketing?

NO

| 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 |
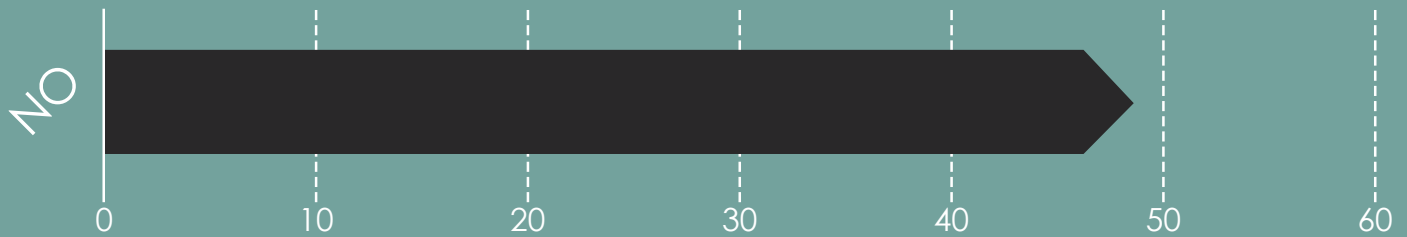
• *Only 1 in 2 marketers feel they have sufficient ideas to be successful in marketing.*

Percentage of Confidence of "Enough Ideas" to Fuel Marketing by Job Level

Percentage of Confidence

| 80 | 70 | 60 | 50 | 40 |

C-Level VP Director Manager Specialist Coordinator Associate
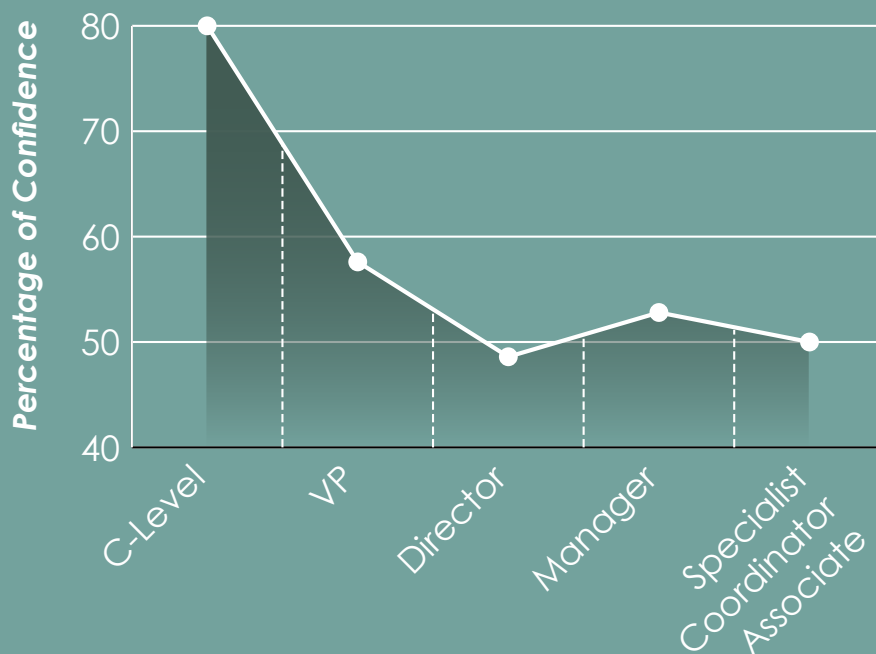
Digging into the data by job type reveals a correlation between job level and perceived health of the idea pipeline. Typically, the folks closer to the execution role feel there aren't "enough" ideas, while higher-ups have greater confidence that there are sufficient idea resources.

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

It's important to have a steady flow of ideas to keep our marketing efforts successful:

NO - .84% ----------------

YES - 99.16% ------------
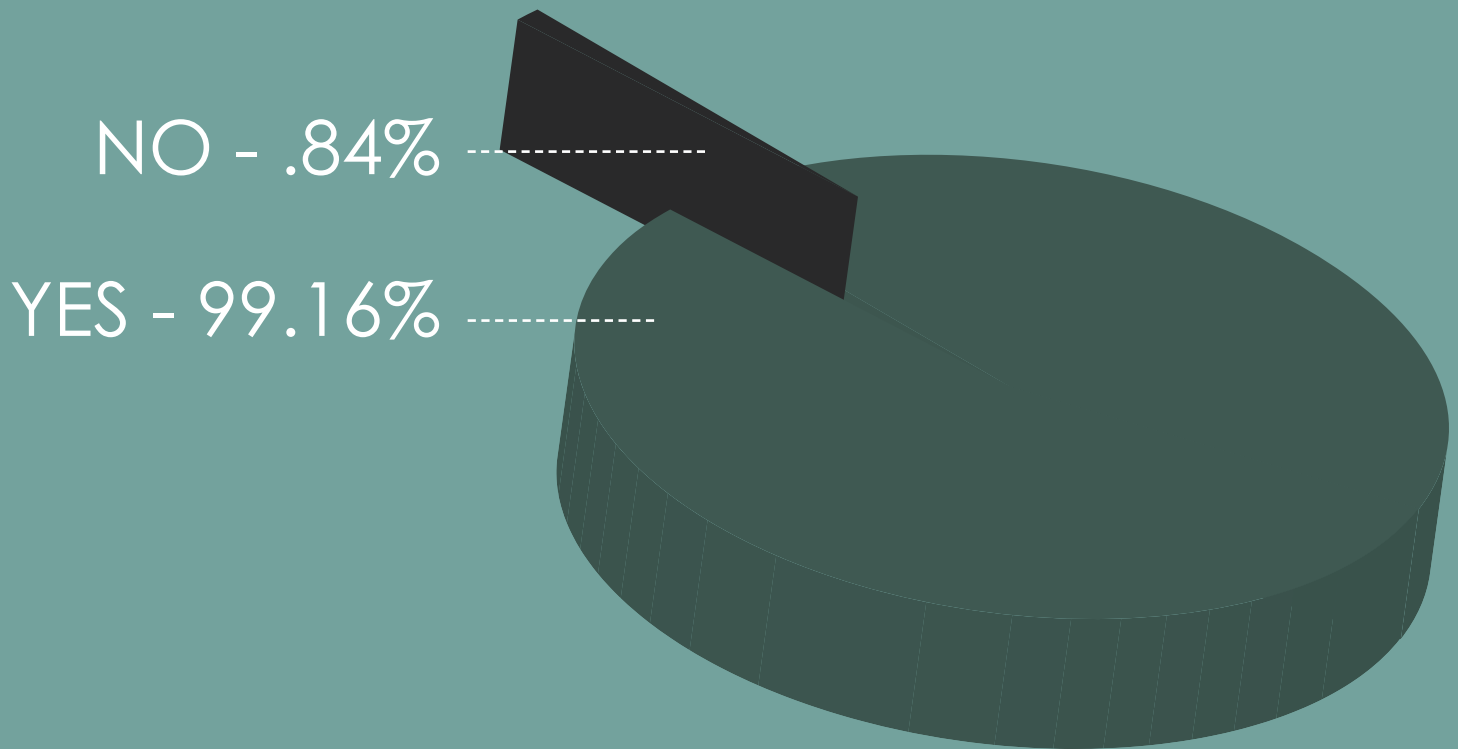
On average how long does it take to produce a single blog Post?

(Including all time associated with the blog from ideation to publishing including graphic design and editing)

Hours to Produce (vertical axis)

Hours	
0-1	
1-2	
2-3	
4-5	
5-6	
6-7	
7-8	
8-9	
9-10	
10+	

X-axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25

Percent of Responses
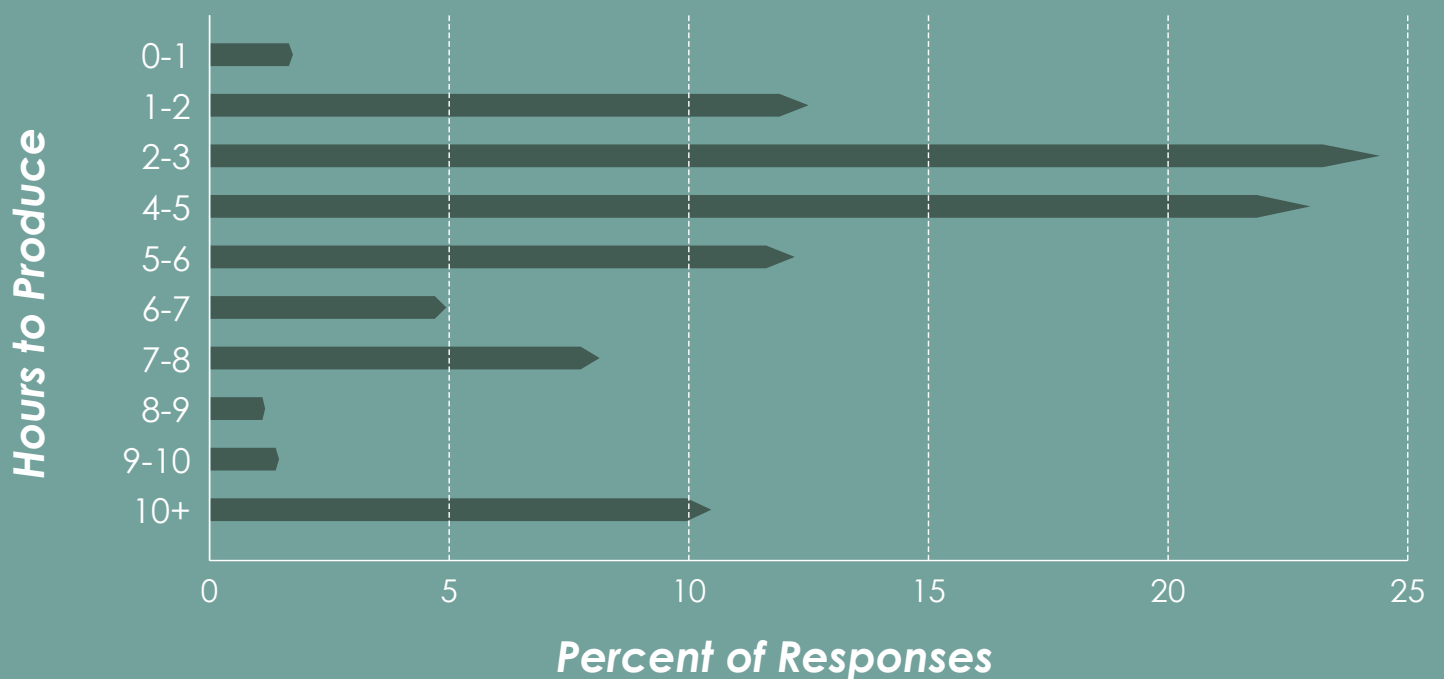
At our company, we do a good job at repurposing content across departments or publications.

Percent of Responses
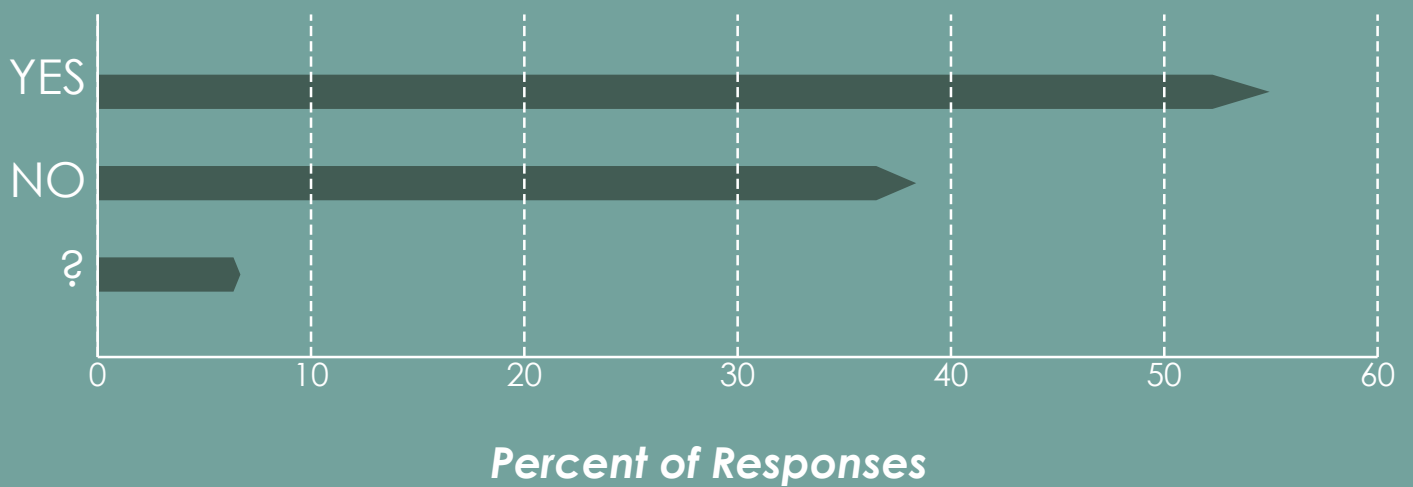
The following marketing departments in my organization rely on content to be successful:

(All that apply)

Horizontal bar chart showing departments and approximate percentages:

Department	Value
Social Media	~86
Content Marketing	~80
Digital Marketing	~78
Demand Generation	~77
Marketing Communications	~74
Event Marketing	~67
PR	~66
Sales Enablement	~66
Product Marketing	~64
Marketing Ops	~46
Global Marketing	~42
Marketing Technology Office	~14
Other	~5

X-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100

IDEA GENERATION
WORK
BOOK

A guide to internally crowdsourcing content ideas and mapping them to larger business goals and objectives
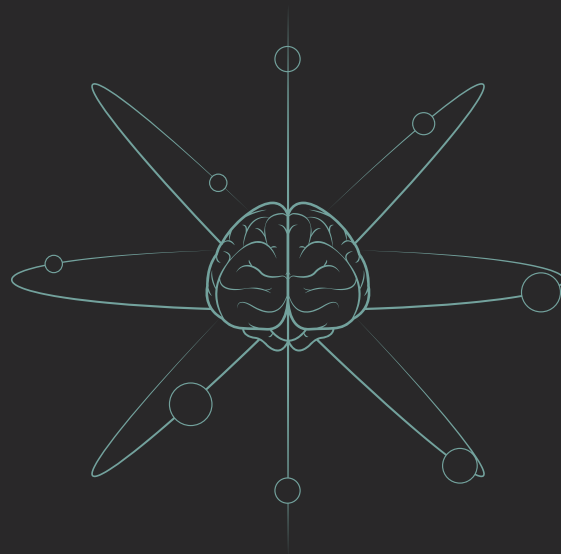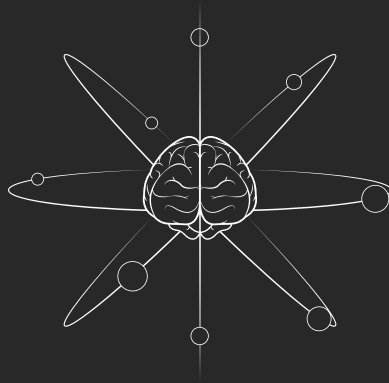
"There's a real lack of awareness out there in terms of how hard that ideation process is... and if it's not a labor of love, then you're probably not doing it right."

-Erin Provey
Service Director: Strategic Communications
Management, SiriusDecisions

So we've learned some important things from the research at hand. Specifically, content marketers say success demands a constant, steady stream of ideas, but they struggle to meet that "quota" quarter after quarter.

Erin Provey, Service Director of Strategic Communications Management at SiriusDecisions, spells out the problem:

*"I think the biggest struggle that my clients face is the misperception internally that content is something you can just pump out if you've got a few designers and writers at your disposal. There's a real lack of awareness out there in terms of how hard that ideation process is...and if it's not a labor of love, then you're probably not doing it right. It's easy to churn out high volumes of flimsy content. It's hard to align internally around specific buyer personas, get to know those personas deeply and granularly and then spearhead the project of unlocking organizational expertise to fuel ideation in the creation of really great content. In B2B orgs, the content marketers often don't have the subject matter expertise required to fuel the ideation process—this is what makes it painful. It's not just difficult intellectually—it's a logistical challenge for many."*

Without the right expertise, thinking of topics and ideas for content takes a lot of time, and less time can be allocated toward execution. Not a good barometer for success, there.

This next section is an "ideation guide," developed to provide B2B marketers with a simple sketchbook for getting a handle on ideation, process, and ongoing idea generation.

At Kapost, we call the approach "internal crowdsourcing." Let's dig in.
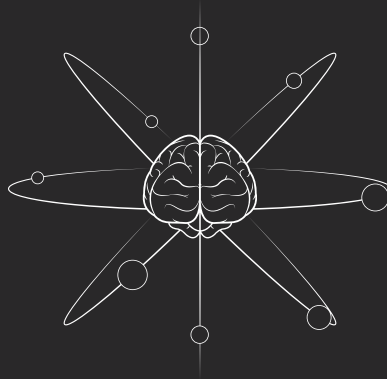
"*All achievements, all earned riches, have their beginning in an idea.*"

- Napoleon Hill

What Is Internal Crowdsourcing and What Are the Benefits?

Internal crowdsourcing is an approach that helps marketers fill idea gaps—and free up more time for quality content production—by turning to internal experts for help.

What Are the Benefits?

There are a host of reasons those who are using a crowdsourcing approach find it powerful.

Internal experts provide valuable insight, authoritative perspectives, or completely new subject areas to focus on with content.

Technical experts provide substantive contributions to marketing messaging that make content higher quality and more informative, and that often dive deeper into product-specific questions buyers might have.

It helps with internal buy-in for marketing efforts. Communication is the key to any relationship, whether that's buyer-vendor or department-department. Communicate about ideas and watch your siloed walls vanish.

It helps curb the vast quantity of ideas needed. Give your marketing team the creative space they need to produce high-quality content by offloading some of the ideation work. Your whole company stands to benefit.

Real Reasons B2B Marketers Would Like to Crowdsource Ideas:

"More technical content could be generated from other depts."

"It would not only speed up the content creation process but also help as it comes to content reviews/approvals and awareness of projects taking place."

"There are many people with special skills whose expertise could be an enormous help in content."

"Lots of people have the beginnings of great content ideas, but don't have the time (or skill) to create the content. It would really help to have a broader base of ideas that marketing can build on."

"Because the marketing department is not the one in touch with clients and prospects every day so we need the ideas from other departments."

"It will make other departments feel more empowered and listened to. It is always important for marketing to do solid *internal marketing.* It makes it easier when we go to other departments with asks if they feel listened to; and oftentimes they have great perspectives and ideas to share anyway."

"Our company has seven locations, 2000+ members and 4000+ events per year—one person can't know it all."

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

Your Turn. Start with Strategy.

Before you start running over to a dozen peoples' desks and asking them if they can contribute ideas to the marketing team, set up some quantifiable metrics and processes to keep you on top of tracking your effectiveness at idea generation.

1 Describe how you will crowdsource ideas from your organization:

_____.

2 Number of ideas you want to get from people outside the marketing department in your organization per quarter:_____.

Okay, just one shameless plug. Kapost has a simple crowdsourcing form that allows marketers to easily gather ideas across their business. Ideas are then siphoned into a single portal where editors can either "approve" ideas into the production pipeline, or "reject" them.

Learn more here.

Identifying Internal Thought Leaders for Greater Idea Generation

One thing that separates good and bad content marketers is identifying and using internal resources and experts. Good content marketers tap into their "internal thought leaders" to generate ideas, and ensure that all aspects of the business have a voice in determining what kind of content is created.

For instance, the content topics and types generated by your sales team might be different from your product team's ideas.

1 To get the most from your business, identify five thought leaders, or people in a position to be thought leaders, in your organization that could help generate ideas.

*Business Unit:*_____

*Person:*_____

*Business Unit:*_____

*Person:*_____

*Business Unit:*_____

*Person:*_____

*Business Unit:*_____

*Person:*_____

*Business Unit:*_____

*Person:*_____

2 You'll also need someone to ping those folks to contribute to your content ideation. List the person responsible in your organization for communicating with internal experts, or sending the *Kapost crowdsourcing form.*

*Person:*_____

Ensuring Idea Quality, Consistent Messaging

Not all ideas are good. One best practice we recommend is to identify a process to vet the ideas that come through the door to ensure consistency in messaging, to eliminate redundant content, and to group ideas into broader themes and topics.

1 Person responsible in the marketing department for approving or rejecting ideas:

_____

2 Describe the process and cadence that person uses to check the idea bank and assign the idea to a content creator:

Mapping Ideas to Key Business Goals

The SiriusDecisions Model for Content states that one of the most important steps in the ideation phase is architecting.

Architecting is the process of mapping a specific buying stage, business goal, or persona to a content asset.

To make sure you get the most out of crowdsourced ideas, map each idea to a key business process, sales stage, or step in the customer's decision-making process. We've created one table as an example. Create your own with the second table.

Stage	Common Problem	Content idea/type that could help solve this problem at this stage in the decision-making process
Discovery/ Awareness	Found our competitor on YouTube	Create a weekly educational vlog regarding our expertise
Consideration	Found benefits of our competitor more compelling	Develop a short infographic that highlights your product
Intent	Customer is interested but dubious about cost	Dedicate a section of your blog to client testimonials
Evaluation	Your customer feels like they may not have made a completely educated decision.	Develop a SlideShare that recaps the key benefits of your product vs. your competitor's product.
Purchase	Your customer is waffling, and holding out on signing the contract.	Have a guest blog post that talks about the benefits of signing up early.

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

Stage	Common Problem	Content idea/type that could help solve this problem at this stage in the decision-making process

Content Ideas: *Research on Marketing Content Ideation*

Organizing Ideas
into Scalable, Useful
Archive Structures

Now that we've tied ideas to key pain points and business needs, create groups for your ideas so they're organized within an overarching campaign, program, or integrated initiative. This helps departments outside of marketing find content and use it within their various functions.

In this exercise list 15-20 content ideas, and then group those ideas into three broader categories. These categories are called different things at different organizations:

- *Campaigns*

- *Themes*

- *Programs*

- *Events*

- *Product Features*

- *Product Lines*

- *Content Pillar*

The important part is that the content is nestled under a broader category so that it's not lost, can be repurposed, and other departments can find each content asset with greater ease.

Another thing to consider is your naming conventions for these themes. For instance, at Kapost we name our content pillars:

PL-YYYY-MM-NAMEOFASSET-INITIALSOFOWNER

or: PL-2015-04-IDEATIONPILLAR-JKS

Ideas	Theme/Campaign/Program
	Theme 1:
	Theme 2:
	Theme 3:
	Theme 4:
	Theme 5:

Get More Ideas, Better Content, and More Internal Collaboration— and See the Results

Learn how Kapost enables marketers to crowdsource ideas, and keep them organized and managed within the Idea Hub.

GO THERE **NOW**